



CONSUMER ADVISORY

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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HOW TO SAFELY HANDLE REFRIGERATED READY-TO-EAT FOODS AND AVOID LISTERIOSIS

Listeria monocytogenes is a bacterium that can cause a serious infection in humans called listeriosis. Foodborne illness caused by *L. monocytogenes* in pregnant women can result in miscarriage, fetal death, and severe illness or death of a newborn infant. Others at risk for severe illness or death are older adults and those with weakened immune systems.

Because *L. monocytogenes* can grow at refrigerator temperatures and is found in ready-to-eat foods, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is advising all consumers to reduce the risk of illness by:

- Storing perishable items that are precooked or ready-to-eat at 40 degrees or lower and consuming as soon as possible;
- Cleaning their refrigerators regularly; and
- Using a refrigerator thermometer to make sure that the refrigerator stays at 40 degrees F or below.

Since **pregnant women, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk** for listeriosis, FDA is providing the following advice to those at-risk consumers of foods that have a greater likelihood of containing *Listeria monocytogenes*:

- **Do not eat** hot dogs and luncheon meats, unless they are reheated until steaming hot.
- **Do not eat** soft cheese such as Feta, Brie, and Camembert cheeses, blue-veined cheeses, queso blanco, queso fresco, and Panela unless it is labeled as made with pasteurized milk.
- **Do not eat** refrigerated pates or meat spreads. Canned or shelf-stable pates and meat spreads may be eaten.
- **Do not eat** refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is contained in a cooked dish, such as a casserole. Refrigerated smoked seafood, such as salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, or mackerel, is most often labeled as "nova-style," "lox," "kippered," "smoked," or "jerky." The fish is found in the refrigerator section or sold at deli counters of grocery stores and delicatessens. Canned or shelf-stable smoked seafood may be eaten.
- **Do not drink** raw (unpasteurized) milk **or eat** foods that contain unpasteurized milk.

To keep food safe from harmful bacteria, follow these four simple steps:

Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often

Separate: Don't cross-contaminate

Cook: Cook to proper temperatures

Chill: Refrigerate promptly

For more information on handling foods safely call toll-free

1 (888) SAFEFOOD

U. S. Food and Drug Administration
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